

Rising Equitable Community Data Ecosystems (RECoDE)

*The Voices We Trust: Building Equity-Centered Community
Data Ecosystems That Work for Everyone*

Inside The Report

What

The RECoDE (Rising Equitable Community Data Ecosystems) project team—made up of curious and committed learners from data.org, Data Across Sectors for Health, Health Leads, and the National Alliance against Disparities in Patient Health—set out to better understand how to undo antiquated and dangerous data systems and build in their place an ecosystem that provides all communities power over where, when, and how their data is used to improve individual and community outcomes.

“You might be a facilitator, you might be an academic, but you don’t study poverty, honey, you experience it. And we need to empower those who have to not carry just the burden, but carry the solution; allow them the space to present the solution.”

— RECoDE Interviewee

Why

Across communities, organizations, governments, and industries, data is increasingly looked at as a powerful lever for change. However, data systems built to track housing, health, education, and employment are largely rooted in racist systems and discriminatory assumptions. Platforms and solutions for data collection and distribution have rarely taken deliberate measures to counter those truths, and community voices are seldom at the center of decisions about how data creates value. The RECoDE project sought to center community voices in this work and hear directly from the people who know best how data can be used to create value within the communities they represent.

How

Through a year-long learning journey built around the principles of trust, humility, and authentic collaboration, the RECoDE team convened a series of conversations focused on answering fundamental questions about how we access and leverage resources to ensure that data ecosystems are accountable to the community – hearing from nearly 500 people representing communities across the United States.

Now

Informed by a national survey, interviews, and working groups, the RECoDE project team shares their key findings. The insights examine the current failure points within the data lifecycle, including who is actively engaged and making critical decisions, the impact of funding requirements on sustainability, and the essential need to invest in developing a more diverse technical workforce.

Recommendations to Create Equitable Community Data Ecosystems

1 TRUST STARTS WITH COMMUNITY

Build trust and share power to enable data-driven decision making among multiple partners—this must be earned through longstanding, sustained relationships in the community, and it takes time to manifest.

2 CO-CREATE, DON'T DICTATE

Move from “check the box” community engagement to true community partnership through meaningful co-creation.

3 DESIGN WITH INTENTION

Collective action and data-driven decision-making requires shared goals, design, implementation, and accountability.

4 BUILD CAPACITY

Invest in people—today, as community leaders dig into this work, and tomorrow, as we collectively build a stronger, more diverse tech talent pipeline.

5 RESET THE RULES

Reexamine the mechanisms that hold institutions accountable, and resist the urgency of quick fixes to complex issues like systemic racism.

“Marginalization doesn’t happen with groups who have power. We’ve seen that pattern over and over again. To those in power or those who have the power to create technology...I think trying to frame and reframe that ‘why’ over and over again to them helps.”

— RECoDE Interviewee

Explore the report: data.org/news/recode-report/

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